

**Canadian Council of Areas Studies Learned Societies
(CCASLS)**

Operational Review

Final Report

Undertaken for IDRC and CCASLS by

**Stephen Tyler – Adaptive Resource Management Ltd
Victoria, BC**

**Lynne Tyler – Catalyst Research and Communications
Ottawa, ON**

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CCASLS Operational Review

1. Introduction and Overview

This report presents the findings of an operational review of the Canadian Council of Area Studies Learned Societies (CCASLS), as commissioned by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). It also outlines, in Section 5 entitled “Action Plan”, the decisions and actions agreed upon by the Board at its meeting of September 15, 2006 where the findings of the operational review were presented and discussed.

Terms of reference for this assignment are presented in Appendix A. The review was undertaken at the request of the Council’s current Board, in response to increased difficulty in resolving conflicts in Board decision-making and in operations of the CCASLS Secretariat. The purposes of the operational review were to

- identify contradictions between organizational policies or principles and practice, both in Board and staff interactions;
- identify procedures, roles or responsibilities that appear incongruent with policies and guidelines, or with effective administrative practice; and
- propose options for remediation.

This consulting assignment was undertaken by Stephen Tyler, of Adaptive Resource Management Ltd, Victoria and by Lynne Tyler of Catalyst Research and Communications, Ottawa. The role of the consulting team was to collect and review corporate documents, and to interview key informants as to the origins and status of the organization and its operational practices. The consultants were asked to analyze the information they collected and present findings to IDRC and the Board for feedback and discussion. The consultants proposed to prepare and facilitate a Board meeting at which the report’s findings would be discussed, with a view to reaching decisions on recommended actions. That meeting was held Sept 15, 2006 in Toronto. This report includes **both** the findings and discussion, revised from the draft report (August 2006) based on feedback from Board members, as well as the Action Plan arising from the Sept 15 meeting, reflecting the consensus of CCASLS Board members.

This report will be circulated to IDRC (Gisèle Morin-Labatut) and to the Board members and Executive Director of CCASLS.

The report is organized in six sections: after this introduction, a brief methodology section explaining the consulting team’s approach and identifying sources of information; followed by a section outlining findings in relation to CCASLS’ origins, the role of IDRC and issues related to CCASLS purpose and mandate; a section describing findings in relation to administration and operations; a concluding section (new to this version of the report) which outlines the key

decisions and an Action Plan developed by the Board on Sept 15, 2006; and a series of Appendices with supplemental information.

2. Methodology

The consulting team was engaged by IDRC and provided with a list of board members, the Executive Director and an additional 12 contacts knowledgeable about CCASLS history and/or recent activities for interviews. The consultants introduced themselves and the review process to board members by email. They prepared a brief survey instrument for board members to capture their perceptions of general administrative and organizational functioning, and then conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of 20 persons. Seven face-to-face interviews were conducted with board members and the Executive Director in Montreal, Toronto, Windsor and Calgary. The consultants met with IDRC staff, and reviewed the documentation provided by board members and CCASLS staff, including:

- Recent board correspondence
- Meeting minutes for the past 3 years
- Technical reports to IDRC
- IDRC grant proposal and budget
- CCASLS by-laws and policies
- Membership summary
- Staff job descriptions
- CCASLS and association activity descriptions
- CCASLS website
- Association websites and newsletters

A list of persons interviewed is in Appendix B. Returned survey forms were compiled and summarized as Appendix C.

3. Organizational Mandate and Vision

CCASLS has a unique structure, mandate and identity as a result of its origins and purpose. The consultants found that Board familiarity with the origins of the Council, its evolution and mandate, and with IDRC's rationale for support to the Council was mixed at best. CCASLS is not well-known even among its member associations. Several current or former Board members interviewed for this study related their surprise at discovering after their election to the executive of their respective academic societies that they had also become *ex officio* Board members of CCASLS, an organization of which they had no prior knowledge.

Throughout this study, respondents expressed concern about the future of CCASLS given the current level of tension on the Board and the amount of time and energy that has been devoted (often unsuccessfully) to resolving conflicts. The consultants wish to emphasize a couple of points at the outset: first, despite the real difficulties and tensions which the organization's Board and staff continue to face, the underlying problems are not, in our view, insurmountable. Neither do we conclude that the issues are due primarily to personality conflicts, although personal styles undoubtedly have contributed to the tension that afflicts Board/staff relations. We believe that a small number of simple administrative procedures could greatly ease the Council's current administrative burdens and simplify the tasks of Board members. We elaborate on causal factors and approaches to resolve these below (section 4). But before we deal with those specific issues, we believe that broader concerns about the purpose and mandate of CCALS need to be addressed. These issues are tied fundamentally to expectations about the nature and extent of services CCASLS should provide, the capacities of and demands on its Secretariat and the role of its Board.

CCASLS has been marked throughout its lifetime by relatively modest common commitments. Associations concerned about maintaining their unique natures and separate interests have consistently approached the common effort involved in CCASLS as essentially one of ceding the least possible amount of independence and authority. This approach may not be sustainable over the long term.

We identify the source of the Board's current problems as lying primarily in the domain of administrative and governance procedures. While we don't see the solutions as complex or onerous, we feel obliged to caution all participants that these administrative and governance improvements will take a degree of common effort and a willingness to identify and commit to common goals that may exceed what currently exists. In addition, it makes little sense to devote effort to addressing administrative issues if there is no fundamental long-term commitment to shared vision and common goals. These issues are also closely tied to questions of IDRC funding support, because it was primarily shared vision and common goals that motivated IDRC's original commitment to CCASLS. For these reasons, the Board needs to clarify its mandate and vision as issues of common strategic interest as part of the process of deciding on administrative improvements. Background and analysis of issues follows below, with areas for Board consideration identified and summarized under a concluding section, headed "Actions and Options".

3.1 Origins of CCASLS and Administrative Issues

CCASLS came into being in 1993 primarily because of a commitment to the concept of Canadian-based Area Studies, shared among a small number of key figures at IDRC and the leadership of the 3 area studies associations at the time.

IDRC had earlier supported the separate Canadian area studies associations (in the 1970's and early 1980's) but had run into increasing internal difficulty justifying the grant to its own Board due to

- a) the challenge of linking core administrative support for the Canadian associations to IDRC's primary mandate (applied research undertaken by developing country researchers);
- b) the high administrative overheads of dealing with the associations separately; and
- c) the lack of apparent rationale for selecting these particular academic groups as opposed to others.

As a result, funding gradually petered out in the late 1980's.

For their part, the Associations soon found themselves in financial difficulty. A provision for SSHRC core support was eliminated, and memberships were declining. Over-reliance on a small number of key executive members to manage memberships, finances, and organize meetings led to near-collapse of one association when a single individual retired. In 1992, leaders from CASA and CAAS approached IDRC, which in turn helped organize a meeting of all three association executives (soon joined by CANMES) to discuss the formation of an umbrella organization whose mandate would be to support and promote Area Studies in Canada (see IDRC Rationale below).

From its outset, CCASLS was plagued by deep mistrust and reluctance on the part of member associations to subsume their own unique approaches and interests to those of a broader body¹. Negotiations between the associations to form the organization and agree on its mandate, services, and structure were difficult and time-consuming. Members of each association were adamantly opposed to any kind of "merger", and insisted on maintaining the maximum freedom of independent operation, while conceding they could see no practical options for dealing with financial constraints. In the end, each organization made few concessions. The former CASA office at Université de Montréal would become the secretariat, but only if the incumbent staff person was hired full-time as Secretary (despite, in some Board members' views, lacking key qualifications). At the same time, CALACS was unwilling to relocate its office from Ottawa, so elaborate budget gymnastics were needed to justify admin support to *two* offices for the first few years. Former Board members recall early disputes about how much staff time was allocated to each association, and for what purposes. These were smoothed over through efforts of individual goodwill and compromise, more than through transparent administrative procedures.

A great deal of effort was devoted to developing a documentary framework for the organization (by-laws, policies, job description for the single staff person, etc). All of these had to be negotiated between (and sometimes even within)

¹ Several respondents assured us that this kind of behaviour is typical of academic associations, and that CCASLS has been less acrimonious than most.

each of the associations. Principles for allocating the IDRC grant funds were developed after lengthy, but generally not acrimonious, discussion. Issues of staff supervision, accountability and appraisal were low on the agenda of the initial Board. Former Board members suggest that they saw the CCASLS Secretary as having very few responsibilities to CCASLS itself. All her tasks were assigned by member associations, and there was an impression that her accountability somehow lay there as well. When there was a conflict or some confusion about what was needed, she could refer to the Board who would resolve it by email discussion. During busy periods (such as annual association meetings or newsletter mailouts) the Secretary would hire temporary staff to assist as needed. The Board had no part in these hiring decisions. As the member associations grew and became more accustomed to using the secretariat, demands on staff time grew. The Board sought to meet these by appealing for additional funds from IDRC.

With the subsequent departure of the Secretary in the late 1990's, a new staff person was recruited as ED, but proved unsatisfactory. There seem to have been problems with the individual concerned, but there were also issues identified by Board members at the time of transparency and accountability. These were addressed by eventually firing the individual concerned, and restructuring the position to increase its stature and level of independent responsibility. The President of CCASLS at the time, who was resident in Montreal and hence nearest to the problem, took the lead in dealing with the termination, job description revisions and hiring new staff, after consultation with IDRC and with the engagement of a small number of other Board members. This created a new style of secretariat, with a more professional manager intended to take greater initiative and work with less supervision.²

This situation took effect in 2003, and while many Board members report general satisfaction with operations since, they also recognize a number of problems still being worked out, particularly in regard to communication channels, supervision and reporting, and task assignment. The problems seem to be exacerbated by failure to find an adequate long-distance management supervision approach. While this difficulty might be ameliorated by a bit more scope in the travel budget to allow for occasional on-site supervision by Board members from outside Montreal, we believe that administrative and communications improvements would greatly ease these difficulties (see section 4).

3.2 Purpose and Vision

² These actions, undertaken largely for expediency, also may have created a sort of Board precedent and expectation that the President had to deal with all HR and office management issues (see discussion below in section 4.1.7)

From the outset, there have been two persistent and very different views of CCASLS, which might be distinguished generally as follows:

1) The organization exists solely to distribute funds to the 4 area studies Associations. Its secretariat has no significant function but to serve member associations, and ought to be accountable to them. Associations are individually and jointly accountable for funds which are “passed through” CCASLS for IDRC’s administrative convenience. Associations administer their own affairs, but call on the services of shared staff in the secretariat to do so;

2) CCASLS is a separate corporate entity whose mandate is to support and promote Area Studies scholarship in Canada broadly. Its Board is accountable for funding to IDRC, and makes the decisions as to how those funds are spent. While Board members are drawn from member associations in order to ensure the associations’ interests are safeguarded, they also have a collective interest and obligation to pursue collaborative intellectual endeavours of mutual benefit. Associations agree to both common and separate administrative activities undertaken by shared staff who are managed by the Board.

Despite the incongruities of the first position with the organization’s by-laws, its current Memorandum of Grant Conditions with IDRC, and legal principles for non-profit organizations, it still strongly colours the perceptions of some Board members. The existence of these parallel perspectives is problematic for the organization because it creates misleading expectations about both Board and staff responsibilities and governance processes. The first position may also misconstrue the nature and motivation of donor support (see section 3.6 below). These dichotomous views are reflected in the responses to the questionnaire survey (Appendix C) and underlie many of the current tensions on the Board. It may be timely for the Board to revisit, with IDRC, some of the discussions that were held at the time of its formation in order to try to move towards some consensus on these issues.

The goals of CCASLS, unchanged since its inception and reflected in its by-laws, are:

- Work *together* to build organizational capacity and expand membership;
 - *Promote area studies and development studies* in Canada;
 - Encourage research and facilitate the dissemination of research results.
- (emphasis added)

While specific collaborative activities are not identified in the by-laws, it could be reasonable to infer from these goals that they would cover substantive administrative collaboration; collaborative development of membership-based organizational capacity (e.g. CANMES); conferences not only of the area associations but also cross-area, development-oriented sessions; journals and graduate student support. These are, in fact, all areas in which the Council has been active to some degree. It has, however, proven difficult to make much

progress in several areas. Because the nature of collaborative activity is a central indicator of common goals and shared vision of the member associations, we address areas of collaboration further here.

3.3. Collaboration

Undertaking joint activities on areas of scholarship of common interest was one of the prime reasons given for establishing CCASLS, but it was not frequently mentioned by current board members in the interviews. In fact, it tended to be raised more often by former board members.

This is not completely surprising. When administrative matters are not operating smoothly, it is easy to lose sight of the academic collaboration work that was one of the original intentions in founding CCASLS.

However, it is important for the board to consider the scope of cooperation and activity that you envision in academic spheres. It was highlighted that many of the activities of the different associations are very similar: e.g. studies of structural adjustment policies, so there should be intellectual benefits to working together. Some of the areas that were highlighted in interviews as successful joint activities under the initiative and sponsorship of the Council included:

- joint thematic workshops;
- joint methodology workshops for grad students e.g. on practical problems of doing research in the Third World;
- joint sessions of two or more of the four associations on issues of common interest;
- exchanges of papers among scholars, especially graduate students;
- competitions for papers to be published by CCASLS.

There have also been two joint conferences on a common theme, which were felt by most respondents to have been of only limited success. However, during any given year, the number and scope of these collaborative ventures has been very limited.

These experiences point to opportunities for continuing academic collaboration, but may also suggest the need for refining plans and focusing expectations realistically. During a period when the Board is preoccupied with internal conflict and administrative issues, it would be helpful to maintain mutually beneficial opportunities for working together that have a high probability of success.

The question of administrative collaboration is also clearly suggested in the by-laws and one of the explicit objectives of IDRC and the founding members of the Board. Yet the degree of administrative collaboration remains very limited. Each association maintains separate membership lists and structures, different membership categories, criteria and terms; and independent accounting

systems. This greatly reduces opportunities for administrative economies of scale that were one of the key reasons for forming CCASLS in the first place (see discussion in section 4.1.4), and eliminates a range of opportunities for fruitful collaboration and building common interest.

3.4 Evolution of CANMES Status

CANMES is in rather a unique position within CCASLS, as it is not a full-fledged and autonomous Canadian association in the sense that the other three are. While CANMES sees itself as having identifiable members, these are defined as the Canadian members of the US-based MESA. There is confusion and inconsistency between the CANMES membership lists and the CCASLS records. CANMES receives a list of Canadian members annually from MESA, but this list is not the same as that used by CCASLS.

The group had its first Canadian conference last year. Prior to that time, the group's only opportunities for professional interaction were *ad hoc* meetings at the US association conferences. IDRC support was used to fund Canadian grad students to present papers at these conferences.

When CANMES was invited to join CCASLS, at the time of its inception, some members of the Board had the expectation that CANMES would shortly become a membership-based Canadian association like the others, and would subsequently avail itself of the shared secretariat services. This did not happen. IDRC had expectations of a more formal status for CANMES as well (reflected in part in the way CCASLS framed the first of its organizational goals, see section 3.2 above), which came to be seen as a condition for its continued receipt of an equal share of grad student funding. These expectations were formalized by the CCASLS Board in what was described as an "agreement" with CANMES that it would move towards becoming a membership-based Canadian entity with support from CCASLS. Following discussion, certain expectations and conditions were placed on CANMES to evolve more quickly towards association status.

Two issues seem to have arisen in regard to this. First of all, incoming leadership of CANMES do not appear to have been fully briefed about these expectations and where and how they originated. Ideally this would have been done by the outgoing CANMES leadership but failing that, it would have been up to CCASLS. In light of this, the frustration of CCASLS board members at what appears to them to be a "lack of progress" seems to have caught CANMES representatives off-guard and the exchange was not as productive as it might have been, especially as the CANMES representatives were not able to attend the CCASLS board meeting where it was raised.

Secondly, there is not yet a clear plan understood by all parties, as to how CANMES hopes to proceed, and how CCASLS can assist in this. CANMES has

made several steps to consolidating a Canada-based MES area studies community, but its strategy and direction have not been clearly articulated yet. There is a general commitment by CCASLS to support CANMES in its efforts but concrete and practical responses are not yet obvious.

This situation suggests two areas that need the consideration of the board:

- 1) Clarify expectations with CANMES of their own strategy for development, and agree on a plan and timetable that is satisfactory for them, CCASLS and IDRC;
- 2) Set out the support, if any, that CCASLS is able to offer CANMES to assist them in successfully implementing the plan.

3.5 IDRC Rationale for Grant Support

In the early 1990's when IDRC was approached to re-institute funding support to the three Area Studies associations, sympathetic program officers in the Centre faced a challenging internal context. The Canadian associations had been portrayed in an earlier review report as contributing little to scholarly efforts in development, partly because their membership all belonged to strong US or international associations which sponsored major journals and regular conferences anyway. The Centre at the time was under increasing financial and political pressure to demonstrate effective results, as the federal government eliminated dozens of Crown Corporations and independent research councils while slashing operational budgets and professional staff.

Some executives in the Centre, however, strongly supported the cause of Canadian-based Area Studies, not only to advance scholarship but to build a higher profile for independent analysis and public outreach by scholars that was oriented to Canadian foreign policy and international aid agendas in the post-Cold War era. Because the principle costs of maintaining the associations were administrative, the Centre supported economies of scale through shared administrative systems and staff (especially membership list management and administration of common funds for conferences, grad student support and public outreach). Their intent was to ensure stability and sustainability of the separate associations by building an administrative platform that would not be affected by the succession and mobility of leadership in each association.

A clear IDRC objective articulated when the CCASLS was founded was the desire to support greater collaboration and common intent between the four Canadian associations, both across regions and in outreach to a public concerned with international development issues. Support to CCASLS was seen

as an element of the new Canadian Partnerships' program, established in 1992 to engage with, and support, the Canadian development research community.³

Despite some apprehensions after the difficulties of gaining even minimal consensus on administrative structure and budget for the new organization, IDRC has continued to support CCASLS. Many Board members (both past and current) were deeply appreciative in their interviews of this support, and credit IDRC with ensuring the survival of area studies associations in Canada. This support has not been automatic: fiscal pressures on the agency mounted throughout the 1990's, and CCASLS' grants were several times challenged internally (partly on grounds of their high cost relative to the number of registered members of the associations).

Association memberships have grown in recent years, and IDRC's financial situation has improved, but it is now operating in a changed policy context (both foreign and domestic). Demands for operational streamlining and demonstrable cost-effectiveness remain prominent considerations for the agency's programming. Many program managers and executives have changed in the past few years. IDRC's current grant to CCASLS expires in 2007, and a broad evaluation is planned to take stock of the Centre's commitments and CCASLS accomplishments prior to consideration of future funding support.

3.6 Operational implications and strategic options

There is currently not a broadly shared vision on the Board of CCASLS' purpose and mandate. This poses obvious operational problems, because without a substantial degree of consensus among Board members on the organization's *raison d'être* and mandate, there is bound to be disagreement on operational priorities and procedures.

There are currently few shared activities or shared administrative systems between CCASLS' member associations. In the absence of such collaboration, it could be difficult for CCASLS to fulfill the intent, if not the letter, of its by-laws and its contractual obligations to IDRC, both of which refer to substantive collaboration and shared administrative systems.

Differences in perspective were understandable when the new Council was attempting to link three autonomous associations for the first time. However, almost 15 years later, these differences seem not to have diminished much. There remain few incentives for interaction and collaboration among Board

³ This program reflected the Centre's strategy, expressed in its policy paper *Empowerment Through Knowledge* (1992), to foster enhanced partnerships with Canadian organizations ready to work with the Centre to strengthen Canada's response to problems of international development.

members beyond the minimum necessary to administer the IDRC grant. There is a fairly high rate of turnover, and no mechanism to build an entity that is, in the words of one person interviewed, “greater than the sum of its parts”.

By contrast, the Associations themselves have their own (evolving) organizational cultures, interact among members regularly (for teaching, publication, career development, research, journals, etc) and have a strong sense of internally shared identity, interests and history. There is none of that for CCASLS, nor do the Associations seem to foster awareness of CCASLS or any obligation of service to that organization amongst their members.

There are few links between the Associations and CCASLS other than the secretariat services on membership and conference organization, which are often nearly invisible. New Board members arrive with at best a limited sense of the organization’s mandate and potential, and may not even take the time to acquaint themselves with operating policies. Despite *ad hoc* efforts of past Board members and staff to ensure continuity, and the lengthy tenures of a handful of dedicated leaders, CCASLS has no real identity or profile, and new Board members are often surprised and puzzled by the organization’s agenda.

To some extent this is understandable, given the voluntary nature of CCASLS Board involvement and the many other professional commitments (including Departmental, Research Centre, disciplinary, American Association membership, and Canadian Association executive duties) to which all Board members owe a stronger allegiance. However, a key contributing factor, we believe, is that Board members are drained of enthusiasm and initiative by having to devote excessive time and energy to administrative fire-fighting and conflict management.

So how relevant is CCASLS to the member associations and their leadership? Does it have the potential to become more so? If administrative and procedural headaches could be simplified, would Board members be willing to invest more time in common ventures, or would their time savings be more productively spent on other higher priorities? There may be little point to investing effort in improved operational procedures if there is no consensus that the organization **should** become more than the sum of its parts.

There are several possibilities for the evolution of the organization. Those involved may conclude it is too difficult to overcome deep-seated mutual suspicions and persuade each other of the value of collaboration and common vision. The organization may need to be restructured, or may ultimately disintegrate. However, many respondents, despite their current frustrations, voiced recognition of the growing need both for Area Studies with a Canadian perspective, and for intellectual dialogue and collaboration between scholars of different regions, in the context of Canada’s tautening linkages to the global community. They expressed hope that CCASLS could play a modest role in

strengthening such collaboration, and in helping to ensure that Canadian decision-makers are better informed on development issues.

In practice, any consensus is most likely to emerge only over time through functional experience. We suggest in section 4 some tools which should smooth that experience, but emphasize that proceeding further on this path will require an interim willingness on the part of the Board to suspend judgement, and make collaborative commitments.

Actions and Options (for discussion at Sept 15 meeting)

1. Consider **greater** administrative and intellectual collaboration, on the condition that CCASLS management can be streamlined. Options (some already suggested by Board):
 - a. streamlining membership categories for greater consistency
 - b. common structure for membership data
 - c. better coordination of conference and newsletter planning
 - d. commitment to ongoing / regular joint activities (e.g. methods workshops)
 - e. annual competition / award for student papers
 - f. standardized accounting system structure, with separate management by associations
 - g. common accounts management
2. Address the needs and requirements of CANMES
 - a. Clarify expectations of CANMES strategy for development and agree on a plan and a timetable that is satisfactory for them, CCASLS and IDRC;
 - b. Set out the supports, if any, that CCASLS is able to offer CANMES to assist them in successfully implementing the plan.
3. Increase CCASLS identity and profile among Area Studies associations, in relation to shared services and activities (as these are consolidated).

4. Administration and Governance

4.1 Findings and Analysis

Concerns about administration and governance were a major part of the motivation to undertake the operational review. There has been a significant level of tension and conflict, both among board members and between some of the board and staff. As a result, both board and staff have had to expend considerable time and effort in attempting to resolve these issues, often with minimal success.

From our analysis of the situation, we would suggest that much of this is unnecessary, and can be reduced and even avoided altogether in the future, with the implementation of a few improvements in structure and policy.

Based on what we have uncovered, there is nothing seriously wrong with CCASLS. It is merely going through growing pains, and has reached a point in its development where the board needs to make some choices.

Centrifugal forces in a council of autonomous associations are very strong. CCASLS has been largely reliant on the personalities of the individual board members involved to ensure the relatively smooth operation of the organization. That can only last for so long, and inevitably the organization has run into a situation where personalities are not enough.

The organization needs a more robust structure capable of allowing CCASLS to function effectively without having to rely on the personal affinity of board members. Such structural and policy changes would move CCASLS away from its historical heavy reliance on the personalities and specific skill sets of individual board members in dealing with internal issues, and instead shift to an explicit, codified, organizational approach to these matters.

Despite the difficulties, CCASLS has accomplished a great deal, due to the strong sense of responsibility among the people we interviewed and the enormous investment that has already gone into the organization.

As part of our information-gathering, we sent a questionnaire to current board members and to a handful of those interviewed who were recent Board members. The results, which are provided in Appendix B, indicate several areas which are cause for concern, notably

- human resources and board/staff communications,
- dealing with conflict in the organization, and
- strategic direction (achieving the purpose of the organization, strategic planning / work planning, and evaluation).

In addition, it is worth noting that on almost all questions, board members had quite divergent perceptions, reflecting the dichotomies identified in section 3 above, and the importance of the current operational review and discussions by the board.

This section outlines our analysis of the key administrative and governance concerns identified by board members and the Executive Director, and suggests some possible ways to address them.

4.1.1. Conflict on the board

This was an area mentioned by almost every current board member. In fact, this is the prime reason for the operational review. Several attribute the difficulties to “personalities” and refer to previous boards where there were disagreements but not conflict. Generally speaking, when “personalities” are in conflict, there is an underlying issue or issues which trigger the conflict, and the personal styles of the individuals involved merely exacerbate, but do not cause, the problem. We believe that is the case here, and that the board needs to address underlying structural concerns, as well as put in place some practices to make it easier to address future concerns more amicably, as there will always be issues and areas of disagreement for the board to contend with.

These suggested structures and practices are outlined in the following paragraphs, and summarized under “Actions and Options”.

In addition, it may be helpful for the board to establish a code of conduct, which would guide board interactions with each other and with staff, both during meetings and between meetings.

4.1.2. Supervision, authority and accountability of the ED

There seem to be a range of views among board members about the accountability of the ED, and the related issues of her authority and how supervision is provided.

There are many challenges inherent in supervising the Executive Director of CCASLS, and providing adequate guidance, support and accountability. Long distance supervision is always difficult. Communication by telephone and e-mail is not as satisfactory as personal contact, especially for delicate or difficult conversations.

Working with four distinct, independent associations, and trying to meet their differing needs and requirements, is certainly challenging, especially when the impression is that the Secretariat is directly responsible to each of these associations – that they are, in a sense, each supervising the ED. Although this is technically not the case, this impression can easily creep into the relationship. Contributing to this is the lack of clear parameters and limits – what can associations reasonably expect of the Secretariat?

The ED is expected to take initiative in various aspects of her responsibilities, but sometimes exceeds what associations would like. Some of the parameters for the ED job are not as clear as they might be. What happens if she asks for permission / guidance and hears nothing? Should she proceed or not? What happens if the ED, as a professional administrator, identifies a potential problem in an association? Should she bring this to the attention of the association? Should she offer suggestions?

Because there are four autonomous associations, it is difficult for each association to know what other demands are being placed on the Secretariat. Tasks frequently pile up during the same period of time, and conflicting priorities can arise on a regular basis. Associations have a responsibility to make their requests with adequate advance notice, but this is not always possible, especially in a volunteer-run organization. It is easy for an association to forget that they are only a small part of the larger structure.

In the past, if accomplishing the assigned tasks turned out to be more complicated than expected, staff went back to the board. The board then resolved any issues, generally by email. The board provided direction to the Secretary, and board members were expected to consult with their members or executive to clarify positions and negotiating room on any sensitive issues.

In 2002, there was a transition from a secretarial style of staff structure to a professional managerial style. This was accompanied by an increase in IDRC funding to support the higher caliber of staff required.

The practice since that time has been to have the President supervise the ED. This places enormous demands upon the President, complicated by the fact that the President and the ED will rarely be in the same city or even in the same time zone. It is also important to recognize that the board is the employer legally, not the President. So, even if the President plays a supervisory role, the board still has an obligation to provide clear direction to the ED collectively, and the role of the President is to assist and guide the ED to fully understand and correctly interpret the direction of the board.

Not all current board members are comfortable with this change. They believe it has resulted in the ED being accountable only to the President, whereas they believe there should also be an accountability to the associations. Formal accountability by the ED to the associations is probably not practical or, indeed, legally sound. However, there are other options for ensuring good and equitable service to associations.

The model of a council or federation of autonomous associations is quite common in Canada, and there are many examples CCASLS can draw upon in formulating an accountability structure that works better.

First of all, it is important to emphasize that, legally, the ED is accountable to the board – not to the President, or an Executive Committee, or member associations. However, having said that, the board is free to delegate ongoing supervision to a person or body, and the board is also free to specify in its direction to the ED what the relationship and services to member associations is to be.

Essentially, in order to design the accountability structure, there are three main areas where the board needs to make decisions:

- 1) Supervision:** Who is the “supervisor” of the ED? This can be either
- a) the board collectively: This is typically called a “policy board” or “policy governance board” (often referred to as the Carver model, after John Carver who most thoroughly described the model). Under this approach, the only direction and supervision to the ED or CEO is in the form of policy and other board decisions, and the ED consequently has significant authority and leeway for judgment. This works well for large, complex organizations with an experienced professional senior manager as ED or CEO. It can also work well for smaller organizations in which the board meets frequently and can therefore give enough direction to adequately guide the ED.
 - b) an individual board member: This is typically, but not necessarily, the President. In organizations where the President has other responsibilities that are quite onerous, this task may sometimes be delegated by the board to another member. Whoever is given this responsibility, it is essential to remember that they are not creating direction, but rather are assisting the ED to accurately and completely understand and interpret the direction of the board. If that direction is contradictory, inappropriate or unclear, it is incumbent on the President and ED to seek clarification from the board.

Because CCASLS is a small organization, the ED role is not a senior management position. As such, the incumbent will often be someone relatively early in their career path, who brings education, intelligence and enthusiasm to their job, but probably modest experience, possibly none in direct management roles. This means that CCASLS has a responsibility to provide support, feedback and guidance on an ongoing and consistent basis, to assist the ED in developing into the position. You are unlikely to have an individual who is thoroughly skilled in all aspects of the job, particularly because it has such diverse elements, and some aspects will inevitably have to be acquired “on the job”.

This means the supervision role is an important one and should be given adequate and consistent attention. If the President takes on this role, it may be advisable to have other responsibilities of the President undertaken by other board members. Or, perhaps the supervision role is one that can be delegated to a board member, particularly one who has had management experience (e.g. as a university administrator).

- 2) Clear expectations:** How are the needs of the various member associations channeled through that supervisory link? The least effective way of doing this is for everyone to contact the President (or whoever is the supervisor) and tell him or her what they need. Clearly, a structure like this leads to competing

needs, and enormous workload for the President, as well as having to make difficult decisions that will inevitably leave someone unhappy.

The main approach used by other organizations with a similar structure is some kind of formal agreement between the board and the member associations about the mutual expectations and obligations. This can be spelled out in one of several ways:

- a) membership benefits and responsibilities, as set out in the by-laws or in a policy;
- b) a service agreement between the national body and the member associations; or
- c) a very detailed job description / performance contract with the ED, which would be based on discussions with member associations.

Typically, the instrument includes not only what is expected from the office, but also what is expected from the member associations. In this sense, it is a two-way agreement.

This formal description has several advantages. It clarifies for the association what they will and will not receive from CCASLS. It enables the associations to negotiate whatever services are most important for them. It allows the Secretariat, as part of the negotiation, to specify what they need from the associations and CCASLS in order to meet the service standards set out. Finally, it allows an objective standard by which the ED can be held accountable, and one to which the ED is part of negotiating and agreeing.

The current ED job description is fairly detailed and sets out the services that will be provided to each association. This type of document is a good start, and can be elaborated upon with the addition of a few elements, including a listing of what the ED requires in order to meet the service standards (e.g. information from the member association, decision from the board, certain software, etc.)

Some organizations also find it helpful to explicitly state the specific authorities of the ED associated with these responsibilities. There appear to be varying expectations among the four associations about how much leeway the ED has to make decisions in carrying out services for their organization, so it might be useful to have this stated. Appendix D contains a blank authority mandate, an instrument which can be used to elaborate these authorities.

In any case, the board may want to consider a performance contract, which spells out explicitly the expectations of the ED, against which she will be evaluated at the end of the year. The services to members could be contained within the performance contract, or could be referred to as a

separate document. The performance contract includes all expectations of the ED, not just those related to services to member associations.

- 3) **Accountability:** How is accountability assured for carrying out the expectations? The main mechanisms that are generally used include:
- a) a work plan by the ED (generally for the year, and updated monthly or quarterly)
 - b) regular reporting by the ED against the performance expectations and work plan (typically monthly or quarterly)
 - c) annual performance evaluation: CCASLS has a policy which states that an annual performance evaluation will be carried out for each employee, but the process is not well fleshed out. We have attached a typical performance evaluation process for an ED in Appendix D, which CCASLS may wish to use as a starting point.

4.1.3. Scope and quality of the services provided by the Secretariat

There is general satisfaction with the type and quality of services provided by the Secretariat on the part of some board members, given the limitations that the staff work under. However others have encountered significant difficulties.

The original intention in forming CCASLS appears to have been that the four associations would consolidate some of their administrative functions, such as maintenance of membership lists, financial records, conference logistics and arrangements for board meetings, in one office which would provide these services to each association. However, this has never really happened to a uniform degree across all associations.

At different times, different associations have not availed themselves of certain of the services offered by the Secretariat, for various reasons. Some associations maintain their own websites, others have the Secretariat do this. Some utilize the Secretariat to assist in organizing conference logistics, while others contract with a conference service. Some have their financial records maintained by the Secretariat, while others prefer to do this themselves.

In some cases, the reasons for having the service within the association rather than within the Secretariat relate to the association's own preferences, but in some cases, these decisions have been the result of dissatisfaction with the type and quality of service provided by the Secretariat.

The services currently provided to each association are as follows (Note: until recently, services related to finances, association executive meetings, newsletters and conference organizing were also provided to CALACS):

Service	CAAS	CASA	CALACS	CANMES
A. Finances				
Complete all monthly accounting		X		
All banking and reconciliation of monthly statements, including budgeting and forecasting		X		
Work closely with association treasurer to prepare financial statements		X		
Work closely with association accountant for submission of official financial reports		X		
B. Organize association Executive meetings				
Prepare agenda and minutes	X	X		
Attend the meeting	X	X		
Arrange transportation and accommodation for participants	X	X		
Arrange special dinners / events	X	X		
Ensure proper record keeping, including minutes, other documents	X	X		
C. Membership				
Maintain membership lists	X	X	X	X
Initiate action to increase membership	X	X	X	
Respond to membership queries from both current and potential members	X	X	X	
Maintain updated listings of University memberships and backorders of association journals	X		X	
D. Administer grants and fellowships				
Advertise the awards	X	X	X	
Receive proposals and communicate with applicants to ensure submissions are complete	X	X	X	
Distribute completed submissions to selection committee	X	X	X	
Notify applicants of results	X	X	X	
Disburse funds as per approval	X	X	X	
E. Communications				
Post material to the website as provided by the association	X	X		
Arrange printing and distribution of	X	X	*	

association newsletter				
F. Conference organizing				
Prepare call for papers	X	X		
Communication to members about conference details	X	X		
Liaison with planning committee	X	X		
Receive proposals for papers	X	X		
Site logistics, including contract negotiations and management re: room reservations, meeting space, food and beverage services, etc.	X	X		
Manage registration, including registration forms and overseeing registration process	X	X		
Coordinate student funding, including reception of proposals and disbursement of approved funds	X	X		
Prepare conference package	X	X		
Recruit local volunteers	X	X		
Solicit additional funding, e.g. sponsors	X	X		
On-site troubleshooting	X	X		
Prepare conference report	X	X		
G. Association development				
Assist group to develop into full association				X

* Membership mailing labels are generated by the Secretariat, but CALACS is responsible for distribution

Clearly, there is very little consistency in the services that member associations receive. Some board members laud this variability as a reflection of the autonomy of the associations, and the right of each to determine what services it accesses. However, at the same time, there are questions of equity which inevitably surface. Should there not be some base level of service which all associations receive? Similarly, if some associations have dropped out because of dissatisfaction with the service provided (whether justifiably or not), should there not be some recourse for ensuring that the association's needs are met, provided they are reasonable?

The board therefore has two questions to address under this area:

- 1) To what extent should associations receive a similar level of service? This is related to several considerations, including equitable treatment of all four member associations, the efficiency associated with common administrative

services (which is discussed further in the next point), and more fundamentally, the role and mission of CCASLS.

- 2) How can CCASLS ensure that concerns about quality of service are addressed, and, when legitimate, are resolved? This is in large part a question of the role and accountability of the Secretariat, which is addressed in the previous section.

4.1.4. "Value for money" and the efficiency of common administrative services

Many of those interviewed talked about the advantage of common administrative services providing greater efficiencies and reduced costs. However, such efficiencies can only be achieved if the four associations have common systems, for example, if they all use the same database for their membership records. Otherwise, there are quite minimal savings in having the same person do four completely distinct tasks as compared to having four people do these tasks. If that were the case, the four associations could do their administration just as well separately, and possibly cheaper. (Rather than paying a salary and benefits to an employee, they could pay an hourly rate to a small contractor for keeping the books, for example).

It appears from discussions with founders and early members of CCASLS that it was the original intent that such harmonization of systems take place, so that the resulting economies would free up more funds for the work of the organizations.

In fact, this harmonization has never been implemented. The secretariat manages membership data for three of the associations, using common database software. However, membership categories, costs, terms and data fields vary from one membership list to another, keeping the lists functionally independent. The four associations have different financial systems, different fiscal or membership years, independent websites, different newsletter and communication set-ups, and use a variety of different software for these tasks.

The question for the board is whether such harmonization of administrative systems, which would require an initial investment but would lead to long term savings, is desirable and if so, for which aspects.

If the board decided to proceed with harmonization of some elements, an implementation plan would be needed for each element, which might include:

- a) Select which aspects of administration would be harmonized: e.g. membership systems, financial records, communications.
- b) Select one of these as a pilot project.
- c) Determine current and future requirements of each of the four associations in that area

- d) Secure professional advice to design a system, including recommending software, to meet the needs of all four associations
- e) Set up the new system (install software, train staff, etc.)
- f) Undertake the conversion

4.1.5. Hiring process

Several board members commented that there is not a standard process for hiring the ED and that this needs to be formalized. The section of the current personnel policies dealing with hiring is quite general, and does not specify a process.

For the protection of CCASLS, it is important to ensure that hiring practices – for hiring both the ED and other staff – are in compliance with labour laws and human rights legislation. This is not tremendously onerous, but does require certain steps are followed.

An example of a typical hiring process for a national ED is attached as a possible starting point in Appendix D. It has been slightly adapted for CCASLS.

There were also concerns expressed about what input the Board should have into the hiring of other staff by the ED. On the one hand, the ED has authority to hire staff, and the board does not wish to undermine this authority. On the other hand, the board has certain organizational requirements that need to be met, both in terms of the qualifications and responsibilities of other staff, and in terms of ensuring a fair and appropriate hiring process. These might be addressed through hiring policy that allows the board to review the qualifications and job description prior to the hiring process.

4.1.6. Bilingualism

The by-laws of CCASLS indicate that French and English shall have equal status as official languages of the organization, and doubtless all board members support the importance of the Secretariat having a bilingual capacity. However, this capacity is more critical, from an operational point of view, for some associations than for others, and the specific expectations and standards of service in both languages seem to vary somewhat among the four associations.

Although the Secretariat has a basic functional capacity in French, it would appear that texts need to be professionally translated, and correspondence is not sufficiently free of errors to be satisfactory for all associations.

The board needs to first of all agree on the expectations of the quality of French language services from the Secretariat, and then identify ways to meet those standards.

Some suggestions have been made by board members, including contracting out the translation of key texts, and ensuring that staff hired in the future are fully bilingual.

4.1.7. Role of President

CCASLS current practices, whether intentionally or not, place great reliance on the President. Many responsibilities, some of them quite onerous, reside on the shoulders of one individual. This ranges from the typical roles of chairing meetings and acting as spokesperson for the organization, to detailed communications with board members, to conflict management and extensive human resource management responsibilities.

Is this prudent for the organization, given the consequences if all these responsibilities cannot all be fulfilled adequately? Is it fair to the individual involved, given that CCASLS cannot reasonably be expected to be that person's top priority? It is not essential that the board delegate all these tasks to a single individual, and indeed there are good reasons why they might not. Because of the inherent need for supervision of the ED position in a small organization like CCASLS (see discussion under 4.1.2 above), all the member associations may see their interests better served by having that supervision undertaken by a person with aptitude, skills and interest in that task. This may not necessarily be a rotating President, and the term of any Board-designated supervisor may not necessarily be the same as for other officers.

There was some concern by certain board members that they had been excluded from key board communications by the President, and were not included on an e-mail discussion even when they requested it. Whether this was by oversight or for other reasons, it seems likely that workload played a part.

There does not appear to be any succession planning for the president's position, in terms of identifying well-qualified candidates, or much in the way of formal preparation for the incoming president. Particularly if the supervisory role of the President is confirmed or strengthened, this might be advisable. Such a practice is fairly standard in many other organizations.

The current practice of automatically rotating the position ensures equity amongst the four associations, but may need to be revisited in line with clarifying expectations of the President's role, and its relative importance in the functioning of the organization. If the Board chooses to retain the existing practice of concentrating most tasks on a single individual, member association interests may be better served by some other selection process. We note that the current practice has led to some challenges in the history of CCASLS when association executive members were surprised to find themselves simultaneously becoming officers of CCASLS and were reluctant or unable to take on those automatic responsibilities.

4.1.8. Board Tenure and Turnover

Several interviews highlighted issues with respect to the tenure of board members, mostly focusing on concerns about turnover. Association elections are held at different times so turnover on the CCASLS board occurs throughout the year. It would appear that some newer members were not fully briefed on some areas, such as Secretariat services and expectations of member associations.

There have been a few suggestions about how to deal with this including the possibility of extending board term to three years, to provide greater continuity, and preparation of an orientation manual for new board members. We would also suggest that the board consider strengthening the board orientation process, perhaps by an orientation discussion at each board meeting where a new member is present, and by assigning a board member to connect with the new member and answer questions between board meetings.

4.1.9. Legal Responsibilities of the Board

This was not raised by board and staff we interviewed, but as the consultants on the review, we would make the observation that board members do not seem to fully understand their legal responsibilities as a board. Several of the areas of confusion and disagreement which were pinpointed in the interviews actually relate to the legal obligations of the board, and a briefing on that might help set the stage for board decisions on several of the issues touched on in the operational review, including ED supervision. As a result, we would suggest a brief in-camera presentation and discussion about board legal obligations, at the outset of the session on September 15th.

Also related to legal matters, it may be time for a review of the by-laws, as our initial perusal indicated that there are a few omissions (e.g. removal of a board member) and contradictions (e.g. selection of CCASLS board members in one instance is up to the association, and elsewhere is stated as being the association president and another individual whom he nominates).

4.1.10 More Effective Use of Electronic Tools

The internet offers many opportunities for virtually instantaneous information exchange to reduce costs of interaction and improve management transparency and effectiveness. But these tools function very differently from face-to-face or even telephone conversation. In addition to email, there are other internet-based communications options that could help to increase transparency and confidence between CCASLS Board and staff. As the practice of long-distance management (or “virtual management”) spreads through private and public organizations, both within a single country and across the globe, there is increasing documentation

of ways to make more effective use of these tools in organizational management. These are simple but important.

We all have to deal with high volumes of email, and everybody is pressed for time. We tend to forget, for example, that human communication relies on *visual* clues to interpret the majority of content and meaning in conversations (i.e. reading body language, facial expression, posture, eye movement etc). Tone and voice modulation form another large component of information transfer. While we can recognize the obvious constraints this imposes, it is hard to keep them in mind when we plough through our mailboxes.

Email is excellent at sharing neutral, factual information in response to queries, for validating and confirming information, and for seeking group consensus on simple questions (setting meeting times, agenda, etc). It is also useful for giving direction, as long as assumptions are checked. Email is particularly inappropriate for conveying emotional content (e.g. pleasure, confusion, frustration, satisfaction, irony, disappointment), as written messages can be easily misinterpreted and emotional content attributed when it was not intended.

A useful general guideline would be to use email in order to convey and share information, to clarify matters of fact, for scheduling, or to document agreements that were reached by telephone or in person.

If there is confusion or concern about particular information transferred by email, it is often better to inquire by telephone, whenever possible. When we receive a written question, we tend to attribute motive and intent which may not exist. It is much easier to sort out the substance from the intent and emotion ("is this just mis-reading the material, or is it a challenge to my authority?") by telephone.

Email is often counter-productive if used to pursue challenges, criticism, or disputes. This medium does not easily allow for disentangling false assumptions, misleading presumption, or personal feelings (hurt, betrayal, impatience) from the factual issues. There is much less scope for misunderstanding if these matters can be addressed face-to-face. If urgent, such matters can be addressed by telephone, and then use email to document the agreements reached for followup. Face-to-face discussions should generally be part of the followup, even if they have to be postponed for some time.

Voice-over-internet-protocol systems can be used in lieu of telephone, particularly for conferencing, if telecommunications costs are a concern (e.g. Skype).

Web-based tools can also be used to increase transparency and provide better access to management information without cluttering up in-boxes. A portion of the CCASLS website could be structured to archive key operational documents for the benefit of the Board. The site would not impose additional work

requirements, but simply post current versions of documents that already exist. For example, such a website could include:

- Board-approved annual workplans (and most recent updates) for ED and office coordinator
- Weekly or monthly activity reports by ED
- Calendar of upcoming events
- Templates for association use in creating their annual reports to IDRC
- Staff could post responses to FAQ's which they receive from Board members or associations

Actions and Options

Below is a summary of the actions and options related to administration and governance that we would propose for the consideration of the board. Several of these can be addressed at the September 15th session, but probably not all. A proposed agenda is attached as an appendix, which sets out the questions that we would recommend be addressed during the board session. The remainder could be addressed subsequently, building on the board decisions of that day.

1. Clarify services to member associations (and evaluation / accountability)
 - a) decide on degree of commonality in services to associations
 - b) decide on harmonization of one or more administrative system
 - c) determine instrument for specifying services to member associations: service agreement, policy on member benefits and responsibilities, job description / performance contract
2. Set new policy in key areas:
 - a) ED supervision, direction and authority
 - b) accountability (work plans, reports to board, performance evaluation)
 - c) hiring policy
 - d) board orientation
 - e) code of conduct
 - f) bilingualism

(Note: Examples of possible policies in some of these areas are provided in Appendix D. These are adapted from other organizations and are merely presented as options to illustrate some possibilities for CCASLS.)
3. Review the by-laws to correct inconsistencies and omissions.
4. Hold a briefing on the legal obligations of the board as part of the September 15 board session dealing with the operational review (draft agenda attached)

5. Action Plan for Issues in Operational Review

The Board reviewed the draft report from the Operational Review on September 15, 2006, and made a series of decisions about how to move forward on several of the issues raised in the report. This Action Plan outlines the decisions made at that point. These were to be followed up at the Board meeting the next day for more detailed action where needed, such as identifying who would undertake the work and any more precise direction to them that the Board deemed necessary.

5.1 Strategic Orientation of CCASLS

Before the specific options for action, the Board had a strategic discussion about the level of support for three main areas of potential work.

- 1. Greater intellectual collaboration:** There was strong support for this among all board members. Several suggestions were highlighted for areas of focus, and support coalesced around the idea of encouraging and supporting workshops and symposia in different parts of the country. The principal obstacle for greater intellectual collaboration within CCASLS was seen as the lack of sufficient time (both staff and board) and funds. These points are addressed in the actions outlined further below.
- 2. Greater administrative collaboration:** There was also strong support for moving ahead with respect to increased collaboration at the level of administrative services. Several potential areas for greater harmonization were discussed, notably membership and finances. The Board noted the prudence of proceeding incrementally, starting with systems that could be most easily harmonized and where there would be the greatest benefit. Specific actions related to this are also outlined in the details further below.
- 3. Increasing CCASLS profile among association members:** There was general support for this, however there was a wider range of views about strategies and approaches than for the other two strategic areas. Some board members felt that the CCASLS profile could be readily raised among members through newsletters and other direct means. Others suggested that it would be the actions of CCASLS itself, especially in the area of intellectual collaboration, which would be more effective than direct and overt communications methods.

5.2 Actions

Note: In some cases, the Board clearly designated a person or group to carry out the action indicated, but in other instances, the responsibility for follow-up is not

clear. The board indicated that they hoped to assign responsibility for all remaining actions at the board meeting the next day. If this has not happened in all cases, it would be useful for the President to ensure follow-up.

1. **Legal responsibilities:** The consultants will provide a revised version of the written briefing on Legal Duties and Responsibilities of Boards, expanded to include the information on the area of responsibilities as an employer.
2. **Directors Liability insurance:** CCASLS will investigate options for providing liability coverage for board members. This may include pursuing quotes from various insurers on Directors Liability insurance, and investigating whether the university will provide (or already provides) some level of coverage.
3. **Committee on Intellectual Collaboration:** CCASLS will create a committee to seek funding for intellectual collaboration initiatives and propose a program to the Board.
4. **Allocate staff time to support intellectual collaboration:** The board committed to this in principle, and a more precise decision will be made after the review of the report from the Executive Director referred to in the next action.
5. **Allocation of staff time:** The ED will prepare a report for the Board outlining
 - a) the current allocation of staff time against major tasks and responsibilities,
 - b) estimated time savings from proposed efficiencies (e.g. new software, contracting out some tasks, etc.)
 - c) estimated time required to provide services listed in job description to all four associations,
 - d) estimated time required to support intellectual collaboration activities, starting with the regional workshops.
6. **Allocate \$5,000 from CCASLS for intellectual collaboration:** The Board decided to initially focus intellectual collaboration efforts on supporting cross-association regional workshops (see Principles below). An amount of \$5,000 annually will be allocated for this purpose.
7. **Seek funding for intellectual collaboration from associations:** In particular, area studies associations who are collaborating to sponsor a regional workshop will be asked to make some level of contribution to the organizing of the workshop.
8. **Supervision of Executive Director:** The ED will be supervised on behalf of the Board by a designated board member, who will not necessarily be the President. The role of this board liaison is to assist the ED to understand and interpret Board direction. If the board liaison is not the President, the Board will clearly delineate their respective responsibilities.

- 9. Develop service agreements:** Service agreements will be developed between CCASLS and each of the four associations, delineating the service to be provided by the Secretariat, and setting out association obligations (such as information to be provided, etc.). The board liaison will work with the ED to develop these with each association.
- 10. Modify ED job description:** The job description for the ED will be revised, based on any changes arising from the service agreements, and based on the results of the board discussion of the staff time allocation report referred to in #5 above. The board liaison will work with the ED in preparing this revised job description for Board approval.
- 11. Authority mandate:** The ED will prepare a draft authority mandate, for review and approval by the Board, covering all significant decisions within the purview of the ED role. This could be done on an interim basis, using the existing job description. Once the service agreements and the revised job description have been completed, it may be necessary to revise the authority mandate.
- 12. Accountability measures:** The ED will be accountable to the Board through three main measures:
 - a) The ED will prepare an annual workplan for the Secretariat, in discussion with the board liaison. This workplan will take into account information from associations about anticipated events, activities and peak periods.
 - b) The ED will provide the Board with brief quarterly reports covering progress in implementing the workplan, explanation of deviation from the workplan, and upcoming events and activities.
 - c) The Board will conduct an annual performance review of the ED, based on the job description and service agreements. The Board will need to agree on a performance review process (a sample is provided in Appendix D of this report).

5.3 Principles for Support of Regional Workshops

One of the major areas of intellectual collaboration will be through the support of regional workshops. This will start with support for one annual thematic workshop, to be selected from among proposals received, based on the following principles:

- a) Participants in the workshop will include members from at least two area studies associations, at least two universities, and ideally more than one province.
- b) Leadership / sponsorship for a workshop would rotate among the four associations over time.

- c) The proposal demonstrates how the topic would be better addressed collaboratively, across global areas.
- d) There is a strong preference for workshops involving graduate students.
- e) The workshops should be located in different parts of the country.
- f) Ideally, there would be 20 to 50 participants in the workshop, including graduate students.
- g) CCASLS would contribute approximately \$5,000.
- h) Sponsoring associations and universities would be expected to contribute financially.

5.4 Other Items

A number of other items arose in the course of discussion which were not among the priorities for discussion that day, but which might warrant further discussion at a future board meeting. These are briefly listed below.

1. Name: CCASLS should consider changing its name to be more readily understandable and “marketable” to association members.
2. Bilingualism:
 - a) What are the specific needs and purposes for which bilingual capabilities are needed? e.g. answering general member inquiries, provision of official texts and documents in both languages, operation of board in both languages, etc.
 - b) Review various options for meeting those needs, now and over the long term.
3. Linking to policy-makers and NGOs: This has not historically been a major area of activity for CCASLS, but it was raised during the discussions in two or three different ways, and may bear further consideration.
4. Strengthening member associations: What is the role of CCASLS? What can CCASLS reasonably and effectively offer?

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Pursuant to this contract, the consultant shall:

- a) examine the basic organizational documents pertaining to CCASLS: Constitution, By-laws, operating guidelines, job descriptions, and to its relationship with the Centre (Project Approval Document, Memorandum of Grant Conditions);
- b) interview all current Board members, the Executive Director, and up to twelve additional individuals: two individuals nominated by each association and up to four by the Centre, who are or have been affiliated to one of the four associations; the interviews will cover views and concerns regarding organizational and administrative procedures, including roles and responsibilities of the Board and Secretariat, decision-making, reporting, dispute resolution, and internal and external accountability;
- c) prepare a list of indicators against which to assess how the Secretariat and Board make and implement decisions, carry out their operations, and ensure reporting and accountability;
- d) review documentation pertaining to the Council's operations since January 2002, including minutes of Board meetings and correspondence, to determine how Board decisions are recorded, communicated, implemented, and, if appropriate, monitored, revisited and/or modified;
- e) identify any significant discrepancies between policy and principles (as defined in Constitution, By-Laws, procedural guidelines and minutes of Board meetings) and practice (particularly with respect to roles and responsibilities, decision-making, reporting, procedures and processes);
- f) identify specific procedures, roles, responsibilities and reporting relationships that appear to be dysfunctional and/or not in accordance with the Constitution, By-Laws or guidelines;
- g) identify gaps in procedural guidelines to inform decision-making and day-to-day operations;
- h) formulate options with respect to specific remedial measures, and suggest actions to ensure coherence between the fundamental documents and procedural guidelines on one hand, and procedures, reporting relationships, practices and accountability on the other; and
- i) submit to the Centre and CCASLS a final report based on the outcomes of the evaluation by **15 November 2006**. Section A9 sets out the Centre's expectations and will form the basis of its determination whether or not the detailed report is satisfactory.

Appendix B: Key Informants

The consultants interviewed the following individuals as part of the information-gathering for the operational review.

Current Board and Staff

Chris Youé
Steve Palmer
Miriam Grant
Amal Ghazal
Tom Najem
Reeta Tremblay
Josephine Smart
Stuart McCook
Annamaria Piccioni

Others

Gisele Morin-Labatut, IDRC, current program officer
Chris Smart, former IDRC Program Director at time of founding
Elliott Tepper, founding member
Loy Denis, former staff
Yann Roche, former CASA board member, former CCASLS board member
Rex Brynen, former board member of CANMES
Paul Kingston, former president of CANMES
Albert Berry, former president of CALACS and CCASLS board member
Kris Inwood, current treasurer of CALACS
O. P. Dwivedi, founding member, former president of CASA
Ann McDougall, founding member and former president of CAAS

Appendix C: Questionnaire Results

Assessing Our Organization: CCASLS Board Questionnaire

Coding:

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

6 current board members and 3 past board members completed the questionnaire

Questions	Current Board Members	Past Board Members
VALUES AND VISION		
We have a clear mission statement	4, 2, 2, 2, 3, 2 Mean: 2.5	1, 4, 3 Mean: 2.6
We share a common analysis of what we have to do to achieve the purpose of organization	5, 2, 4, 5, 5, 2 Mean: 3.8	1, 4, 4 Mean: 3
PLANNING AND EVALUATION		
We have agreed on the organization's priorities	4, 2, 2, 2, 5, 3 Mean: 3	1, 4, 3 Mean: 2.6
We have a strategic plan or a workplan that sets out the organization's work and activities for the year, in keeping with the priorities	5, 3, 4, 4, 3, 2 Mean: 3.5	1, 5, N/A Mean: 3
We regularly evaluate our work, and act on these evaluations	5, 4, 3, 4, 5, 2 Mean: 3.8	1, 5, 5 Mean: 3.6
FINANCES		
Our organization is financially healthy, both in its current operation, and in its base for future work	5, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2 Mean: 2.5	1, 4, 3 Mean: 2.6
We have responsible financial management procedures, which we follow	4, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2 Mean: 2.3	1, N/A, 4 Mean: 2.5
The board reviews regular financial reports, and acts on them	4, 1, 3, 2, 3, 2 Mean: 2.5	1, 5, 2 Mean: 2.6
We have a shared analysis of the role of the	4, 3, 2, 4, 3, 2 Mean: 3	1, 2, N/A Mean: 1.5

funder in our organization		
COMMUNICATION		
The staff and board are kept informed of each other's work	5, 3, 5, 4, 4, 2 Mean: 3.8	1, 4, 4 Mean: 3
Information needed for decisions is readily available to whoever is making the decision	5, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2 Mean: 2.8	1, 5, 4 Mean: 3.3
HUMAN RESOURCES		
We have job descriptions appropriate to the needs of the organization at this time, with clear authorities and responsibilities	5, 2, 4, 2, 5, 4 Mean: 3.6	1, 5, 3 Mean: 3
We have clear policies on hiring, staff supervision, compensation, board/staff relations, and other areas of human resources	5, 3, 5, 1, 5, 2 Mean: 3.5	5, 5, 4 Mean: 4.6
Staff receive annual performance reviews, based on expectations agreed to at the beginning of the year	5, 5, 5, 5, 3, 3 Mean: 4.3	5, N/A, 4 Mean: 4.5
MEETINGS		
Our meetings are positive use of our time and resources	5, 2, 2, 3, 4, 2 Mean: 3	1, 3, 3 Mean: 2.3
We make well-informed and sound decisions	4, 1, 3, 2, 5, 2 Mean: 2.8	1, 4, 5 Mean: 3.3
We deal with the real issues facing the organization	4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2 Mean: 2.8	1, 5, 5 Mean: 3.6
Everyone who will be affected has input into the decision	5, 1, 3, 1, 3, 2 Mean: 2.5	1, 5, 5 Mean: 3.6
COMMUNITY		
We have a positive role and relationship with other bodies concerned with the issues at the heart of our mission	3, 1, 5, 1, 3, 2 Mean: 2.5	1, 2, 2 Mean: 1.6
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE		
Conflict and differences of opinion are seen as	5, 2, 5, 5, 5, 2 Mean: 4	1, 5, 5 Mean: 3.6

natural, and are dealt with openly and resolved clearly, with respect and generosity		
In our organization, initiative is rewarded, and risk is accepted and managed	3, 2, 4, 2, 3, 1 Mean: 2.5	3, 3, N/A Mean: 3
We develop new leaders: good people stay and grow into leadership roles, qualified people are attracted to be here	5, 2, 4, 2, 5, 3 Mean: 2.8	1, 3, N/A Mean: 2
People tell the truth even if it is difficult, people raise concerns respectfully, and if the organization gets off track, many people raise it.	2, 1, 5, 4, 4, 2 Mean: 3	1, 5, 3 Mean: 3

THREE PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Current Board Members:

- Organizational Culture
- Organizational Culture
- Organizational Culture
- Human Resources
- Values and Vision
- Values and Vision
- Communication
- Communication between the President, the board members and the staff
- Commitment by the board members to complete their functions by deadline
- A clear communication of the role of Staff to the Board members
- Planning and Evaluation
- Board's Role
- Performance Review
- Status of CANMES
- Community

Other (past board members, current board members of associations)

- Hiring Policy
- Staff Performance Review
- Clear relationship with bodies concerned with the issues at the heart of our mission
- Leadership in a Voluntary Association
- Procedure for conflict resolution

- Personnel turnover vis-à-vis institutional knowledge continuity
- Rationale of the organization ["The fundamental premise of the organization, that there is a good basis for the three organizations to come together, is not clear. This was decided by IDRC without agreement from the organizations, ie it was imposed from without, for cost-savings reasons. It is hard to be optimistic for the organizational umbrella if the three groups have very different cultures and needs, and the only rationale is to simplify IDRC book-keeping."]
- "It is pivotal for those involved with CCASLS to have very much in mind what it's there for and how it can and does help the individual associations and the group. In the best of cases each association feels it is getting good value for money and effort from CCASLS and the productive interaction among them is enhanced."
- "Proper governance and supervision of staff is near impossible given the isolation of the CCASLS office from memberships in each of the area studies organizations."
- "The office as it exists lacks critical skills, specifically it cannot provide adequate book-keeping services. Beyond that office staff simply do not take direction from officers in the organizations they are meant to support."
- "It is clear that the secretariat has become an issue."

Appendix D: Sample policies

Hiring Process

The hiring of staff will normally be undertaken through the following steps. In the case of the Executive Director, the board is responsible for completing the process. In the case of other staff, the Executive Director is responsible for hiring.

1. Review job description and qualifications, and update as necessary, including any particular areas of emphasis for the current needs of the organization. The qualifications will distinguish between requirements and assets. The updated document will be approved by the board.
2. Advertise the position. Depending on the position, this would normally include a notice on the CCASLS website and in the newsletter (if this is timely), and an ad in the local newspapers of the city where the CCASLS office is located.
3. Develop criteria, questions and rating grid for interviews, based on the updated job description and qualifications. It is important that a standard set of questions be asked of each candidate, and that the questions be directly related to the job qualifications and job description. The grid will indicate the rating to be assigned for various possible answers to the questions
4. Review applications in two rounds. The first round would screen out any applications that do not meet all minimum requirements. The second round would select the most qualified candidates, who would be contacted for interviews.
5. Hold interviews with short-listed candidates.
6. Determine the successful candidate, according to the pre-established grid.
7. Conduct reference check of successful candidate.
8. Offer the position, and conclude terms of employment.
9. Follow-up with unsuccessful candidates.

Performance Evaluation Policy

1. A performance contract is established at the beginning of the year in discussions between the Board and the Executive Director. The performance contract is based on
 - a) the job description of the ED
 - b) any additional specific tasks, milestones or outcomes for the coming year.
 - c) any areas requiring improvement, based on the previous year's performance evaluation.
2. The Executive Director and the Board will review progress on performance periodically throughout the year, for the purpose of recognizing achievements, identifying and addressing obstacles and providing additional supports as needed.
3. The Board will conduct a performance evaluation annually, to assess the ED's achievement of the expectations set out in the performance contract. This will be a 360° assessment, in which input is gathered from
 - a) all board members
 - b) all staff (direct reports)
 - c) external peers who are sufficiently familiar with the ED's work to assess performance, e.g. this may include board members of member associations with whom the ED has worked closely. The external peers will be jointly agreed upon by the Board and ED;
 - d) a self-assessment by the ED.
4. Input from board, staff and external peers will be gathered on a confidential basis.
5. The Board will establish a performance review committee, normally chaired by the President, to conduct the review.
6. The committee will prepare a draft performance evaluation, based on the results of the input received, for discussion with the ED and with the board. The committee will also discuss with the ED a development plan which identifies areas for improvement and learning objectives. Typically, the draft will first be discussed with the ED, and then presented to the board for decision.
7. The board will approve the final version of the performance evaluation, including a development plan, which will be signed by the President and the ED.
8. One copy of the signed evaluation will be kept in the permanent files of the organization, and one copy will be kept by the President, who will pass this file to the succeeding President.

Authority Mandate

Decision (some examples below)	ED decides, no consultation necessary	ED decides, in consultation with (specify)	Board decides	President decides	Association decides
CCASLS board agenda					
Selection of hotel for board meetings					
Disbursement of expenses according to policy					
Disbursement of expenses outside of policy					
Selection of translator for association documents					

Appendix E: Current Job Description for ED

(As the consultants did not have access to an electronic version of this to insert in the report, copies will be provided at the September 15 meeting)

Appendix F: Proposed Agenda for September 15, 2006

- 9:00 In-camera session: Legal responsibilities of the board
- 9:30 (Staff & IDRC join the meeting)
Introductions, agenda, ground rules, consensus model
- 9:45 Overview of consultants' report: brief presentation, initial comments from IDRC and board members
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Strategic Discussion
- Consider **greater** administrative and intellectual collaboration, on the condition that CCASLS management can be streamlined
 - Expectations of, and support to, CANMES
 - Increase CCASLS identity and profile among Area Studies associations, in relation to shared services and activities (as these are consolidated).
- 12:30 Lunch (possibly a short break followed by a working lunch)
- 1:30 Administration and Governance
- Services provided to member associations
 - Supervision and accountability of ED
 - Code of conduct
 - Other board policies (hiring policy, bilingualism, board orientation, board terms, etc.)
- 2:30 Break
- 2:45 Continue discussion
- 4:30 Next steps
- 5:00 Adjourn for the day

Appendix G: Consensus Model

The following consensus model will be proposed to the CCASLS board at the outset of the September 15 session, for use in making key decisions that day.

In this approach, people are not simply for or against the decision, but have the option to situate themselves on a scale that lets them express their individual opinion more clearly. This model is usually used with a round, so that everyone in the meeting is given the opportunity to state where they are according to the following six levels:

- 1) Fully support.
 - 2) Support with reservations.
 - 3) Acceptable
 - 4) Will not block it, can live with it.
-
- 5) Need more information or more discussion.
 - 6) No; cannot accept it.

If everyone is at level #4 or above, consensus has been reached.

If someone is at level 2, 3 or 4, they have the option of explaining their reservations. These can be addressed by the meeting, if the group wishes to. This is not absolutely necessary for achieving consensus if everyone is already at 4 or higher, but it usually improves the recommendation or suggestion being discussed.

If someone is at level 5, they have the obligation to explain what information or discussion they require from the group. If someone is at level 6, it is important for them to try to offer a solution that can accommodate their needs and the needs of the rest of the group.

In addressing someone's reservations, it is important to

- a) ask everyone for possible solutions (the person expressing the concern and the rest of the group both have a responsibility to find solutions), and
- b) ask people to suggest improvements or alternatives that meet the objectives of the entire group.

(This model was adapted from the BC Labour Force Development Board)